Kalispel Ethnohistoric Uses of the Priest Lake Basin

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Abstract

The Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF) has undertaken a multi-year inventory of its lands on the margins of Priest Lake in Northern Idaho. The Kalispel Tribe in fulfillment of its commitment to see the IPNF succeed in this effort has compiled this ethnographic context overview as an explicit effort to construct a meaningful frame of reference wherein archaeological resources may be more readily identified and understood. Provided within this overview is a brief summary of the eleven resource extraction encampments located within this basin and how they served a larger subsistence strategy for multiple winter villages located outside the basin.

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Introduction

As part of its commitment to aid the Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF) in its inventory of cultural resources in the Priest Lake Basin, the Kalispel Tribe of Indians has compiled the following ethnographic overview of its historic uses for this important cultural landscape. It should be noted that much of these data have been known or at least been available to the academic and cultural resources management industry for the better part of two decades in the guise of an unpublished manuscript written by Allan H. Smith which has for that time lurked in the region's "gray literature", thus for the few that are knowledgeable with those data what follows is not new but rather known information explicitly tied to a cultural ecological perspective. Granted glimpses of these data have been published and circulated to a broader audience in the past (e.g. Deaver 2000), they nonetheless seem to have be given at best only lip service or ignored in preference to alternate and arguably more expensive means of reaching regulatory compliance objectives. It is our hope that by underscoring and making far more explicit the importance this cultural landscape has had and continues to have for the Kalispel people that more meaningful and insightful research shall be completed within it.

As will be demonstrated this large and complex resource patch was an essential asset for the family provisioning needs for two principal winter villages of the Lower Kalispel; the community of nɬx̣ɬóx̣ located at CCA Creek's confluence with the Pend Oreille River and the community of kʷiƛ'té located east and adjacent to the Priest River's confluence with the Pend Oreille River. These ethnographic communities correspond to the archaeological deposits designated 45PO153 and 10BR94/95 respectively. Albeit I can clearly demonstrate nɬx̣ɬóx̣ community's association with the Priest Lake basin due to omissions in the original materials and their proximity to the basin I can only infer kʷiƛ'té community's use of this cultural

landscape[1]. The data summarized herein represents what would have been the normative subsistence patterns for both communities between ca.1850 and ca.1930 and thus encapsulates that era[2] within which the effects of horse culture would have been manifest.

Although it is tempting to assert a direct linear association with these data to a more archaic period for this place, historic facts caution us from such excesses. These being as follows: horse culture (no matter how nominal for the Kalispel it may have been) was in effect; the introduction of fur economy as an alternate or additional means of meeting family needs was in effect; the dramatic and cataclysmic population declines of the 18th and 19th Centuries in Native American communities both locally and abroad reconfigured from their ashes preferential resource targeting in light of reduced human competition for selected resources[3]; missionary cultural assimilation efforts had broaden Kalispel subsistence patterns to include domesticated cultigens; and ultimately the indisputable fact that ethnographic behaviors are an evolved form of antecedent behaviors both successful and not that can only accessed archaeologically. It is for this latter reason that targeted diachronically focused archaeological research has relevance and meaning to the Kalispel Tribe of Indians when it is driven to answer questions and strives to use the least amount of the resource available to answer as many questions as possible. With that said, the period that these data describe antecedes major ecosystem changes resulting from the industrialization and urbanization of the Western United States and the recounted human predation patterns indicate significant changes have recently

[1] Given the fluid membership of either community and indeed their proximity to this landscape, I do not believe this to be too bold or unreasonable an inference.

[2] This 80 year window corresponds to the life histories Kalispel elders of the 1930s shared with A.H. Smith the end of the period corresponds with the zealous enforcement of state game regulations according to my interviews with Kalispel elders (Lyons 1999-2008).

[3] Far too little discussion within the literature pertains to this historic fact and I thus posit it as a credible albeit untested hypothesis.

occurred in the species and habitat compositions native to the study area. Thus this constructed frame of reference *sensu* Binford (2001) ultimately serves the dual purposes of what was the cultural matrix from whence archaeological site formations occurred (at least for the ethnographic period) and what was the natural resource base upon which those decisions were made.

Seasonal Round

The Kalispel Bands were a broad-spectrum hunter-gatherer society that utilized seasonally differentiated residency and subsistence patterning to maximize labor efficiency when and where resources were most abundant. This form of ecological adaptation evolved within the biologically rich and wet boreal forests of the Selkirk and Cabinet mountain ranges. Despite its wealth of natural resources the Pend Oreille watershed does have differential distribution and seasonality of what would be recognized as essential habitat types and relative to other watersheds in the region the complete or relative absence of specific resources. Namely the conspicuous absence of migratory salmon runs in sufficient numbers in this watershed has compelled Roll and Hackenberger (1998:120-148) to designate this area as part of the "Barrier Falls" sub-region of the Columbia Plateau finding the absence of this resource sufficient grounds to posit a potential cultural difference in the populations that resided therein. In fact they clearly state, (Roll and Hackenberger 1998:120); "The presence or absence of migrating salmon and steelhead probably impacted the course of cultural development more than any other single factor." As will be examined in greater detail below, I strongly question the efficacy of that assessment given the robust native fisheries of the Pend Oreille watershed and the diverse methods specifically employed to optimize resource yield per unit effort for

these fish resources. Moreover the cultural evolution experienced by the salmon reliant communities to the west did not occur in isolation but had collateral effects in the adjoining watersheds bereft of that resource. Or in other words the "the course of cultural development" in the salmon rich zones of the region would have been subject to the mechanisms of *Peer Polity (*cf Renfrew 1986:1) wherein the exchange of goods and ideas between those with or without domestic access to this resource would have occurred diluting if not negating the cultural centrality of salmon.

Any discussion of traditional subsistence patterning for the Columbia Plateau needs to begin and ultimately end with a discussion of a community's winter season. From November to as late as early March of any one year the lower bands of Kalispel would reside in winter villages[4] located on the margins of the Pend Oreille river on landforms sheltered from the prevailing winds and in close proximity to winter deer yards (Diomedi [1894] 1998:31; Lyons 2008:4; Smith 1936-1938:213, 278, 292-293). Potentially 120 days of economic inertia had to be preplanned for by placing into storage sufficient foods to meet the basal dietary needs of these communities. In a broad sense the subsistence scheduling and resource targeting priorities made by the SanPoil-Nespelem (cf Ray 1933) in their Winter Village Settlement Pattern (WVSP) are mirrored by the Kalispel system with a substitution of specific resources and a reprioritization of the resources the two populations held in common. Or in other words they had similar strategies yet different resource targets and prioritization of those targets. In the table below is an abbreviated summary of the Lower Kalispel Bands subsistence and residency patterning with specific annotations as to what resources were selected.

Table 1 Summary Annual Lower Kalispel Bands Subsistence Scheduling and Pattern

Month	Resources (method)	Economic Group	Encampment
April	Strawberries Berries Deer	Household Household	Short Duration Camps
May	Early Roots Deer	Household Household	Short Duration Camps
June	Service Berries Deer Roots	Household Household Household	Field Camps
July	Roots Huckleberry (Slough Fish Traps)	Household Household Village	Field Camps
August	Roots Huckleberry Caribou Bull Trout Deer (fire drives)	Household Task group Village Village	Field Camps
September	Mountain White Fish Deer (fire drives)	Village Village	
October	Mountain White Fish	Village	
November	Stored Foods	Village	Village
December			
January			
February	Deer (winter drive)		Short Duration Camps
March	Stored Foods		Village

Readily apparent in the table above are the two scales of economy or labor pools which were utilized within the schedule. The household economy consisting primarily of a kindred group that habitually resided with each other and anticipated that commonality for the majority of the year. This is contrasted by the village economy which consisted of all potential food providers that frequently encamped with other households during the winter. For disbursed resources such as roots, berries, and doe-fawn pairs, and hook and line fisheries the labors of the household economy were sufficient to harvest these resources and coincides with a period of high mobility and population dispersal. This period, approximately 120 days of the

year created two types of small scale (household economy size) encampments the short duration camp which had approximately four-day occupancy (Smith 1936-1938:220) and the field camp which would have been center placed relative to multiple economic activities that had longer windows for resource extraction (e.g., two weeks, as in the case of Bull Trout or Mountain Whitefish). Communal efforts and the use of the larger labor pool coincided with the optimal periods of resource abundance or when environmental conditions (e.g. effective humidity as in the case of the deer fire drive) permitted the use of more efficient harvest methods where quantity of resource was an over arching concern.

The presence of caribou, deer, abundant mountain white fish and bull trout fisheries, these resources' periods of abundance and relative position from the winter villages places the Priest Lake Basin's cultural use and occupancy between late August and late Noveber or when the most frenetic communal winter provisioning activities the bands were engaged in would occur. Historically it is well known and has since been well demonstrated that the Calispell Valley to the west was the tribe's "bread basket" as accurate as that characterization of Kalispel subsistence behaviors is; it is also incomplete and does not consider the full dietary breadth of these communities as it focuses almost exclusively upon camas (*Camasia quamash*). In the figure below (Figure 1) the location of the eleven fishing, hunting, cache, and campsites used by the Kalispel resource targeting and modern place names for these locations are provided in the table below (Table 2).

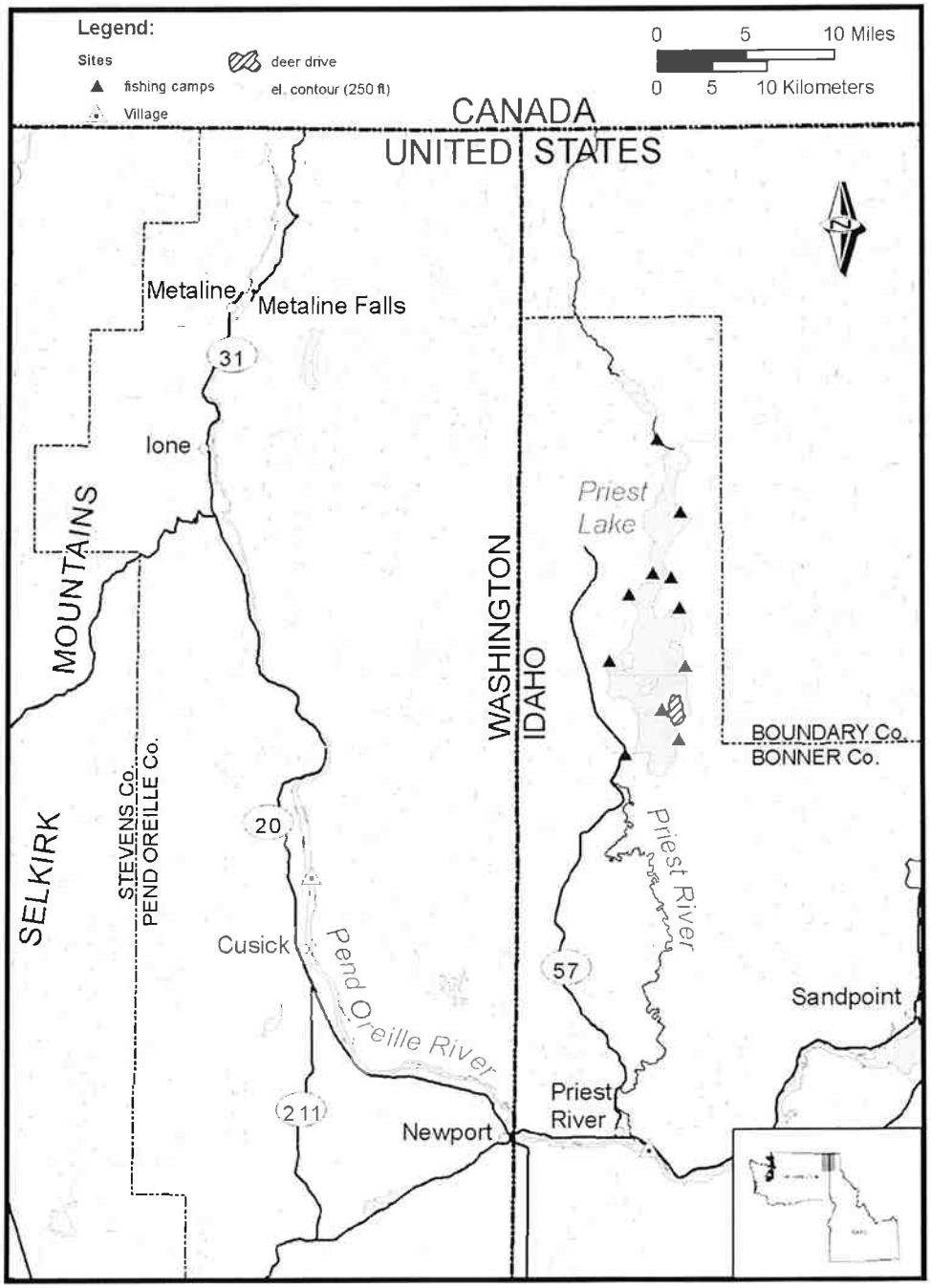

Figure 1. The location and distribution of Kalispel traditional subsistence encampments in the Priest Lake Basin.

Table 2 Summary of Traditional Encampments and Use locations within the Priest Lake Basin

Location	Uses	Comments
Lamb Creek	Stick weir and camp	Only used during the Spring
Kalispel Creek	Stick weir and camp	Mountain Whitefish
Granite Creek	Stick weir and camp	Mountain Whitefish
Soldier Creek	Stick weir and camp	Mountain Whitefish
Hunt Creek	Stick weir and camp	Mountain Whitefish
Indian Creek	Stick weir and camp	Mountain Whitefish
Bear Creek	Stick weir	Mountain Whitefish and lands adjacent to weir were unsuitable for camping.
Two-mouth Creek	Stick weir and camp	Mountain Whitefish also canoe construction
Reeder Creek	Stick weir and camp	Suckers
Caribou Creek[5]	Double stick weir and Camp	Bull trout and caribou hunting camp
Four-mile Island	Cache	Tule mats, lodge poles stored at this location.

Fishing, Hunting, and Logistics

Three fish species were specifically targeted in the August to November time frame in the Priest Lake area; suckers, mountain whitefish, and bull trout. The data pertaining to the springtime fishery at Lamb Creek is incomplete thus species targeting and how that resource fit within the Lower Kalispel subsistence economy will for the time being remain ambiguous .With that said, in all but one location (Bear Creek) where there was a weir there was also an encampment . The most cursory topographical examination of the Bear Creek weir location quickly reveals that the surrounding meadows were/are too marshy to be a suitable place to encampment. As the majority of the fishing locations specifically targeted mountain whitefish that apparently evaded basket traps used where trout fishing was the emphasis (Smith 1936-1938:364) an alternate pen trap or "stick weir" was constructed within these tributaries. A woven stick pen with a plank platform extending from the shore line to the pen was constructed. This pen was center place relative to two wattle wing walls erected within the

[5] Used in early part of August (Smith 1936-1938:375)

stream channel (Smith 1936-1938:384).Some pen enclosures had a 12 foot diameter, others smaller, enclosure size was ultimately dependent upon stream width, all had an opening on the downstream side wherein the fish would enter and at that location a woven gate could be closed to prevent fish escape. Fish enclosed within these pens were speared out onto the beach where they were cleaned and air dried for winter storage. The yields from these efforts were considered communal property and were equally redistributed to the community's families (present or not) by the fishing chief that was tasked with supervision of this activity (Lyons 1999-2008: 42). Based upon archaeological surveys of trout fisheries elsewhere within the watershed (Lyons 2000a, 2000b, and 2001) the archaeological signatures of such structures would consist of multiple fire cracked rock scatter couplets located on either bank of a stream and up and down stream of a tributary creek's outlet. I surmise that the precise location of a weir would change from year to year relative to standing elevations of the lake and its embayment and accessibility of building materials. Smudge fires typically built to reduce mosquito infestation and used for cooking would thus be placed relative to the weir which moved up or down stream from year to year this accounting for the observed archaeological signature.

It should be noted that the optimal productivity of these weir locations was confined to a relatively narrow window, approximately two weeks, and was concurrent with other tributaries throughout the Priest Lake basin indicating the need for these Kalispel families to disburse into multiple fishing task groups for at least the weir construction period at each site. Smith's data indicates that three such weirs would be in operation at the same time (1936-1938:316). Subsequent maintenance and fish processing would arguably only require a nominal

labor pool allowing for other activities (e.g. hunting) to occur in conjunction with the fishing base camp.

From a logistics standpoint two sites within the basin tell us something about the network and schedule of use in the lake. Four mile Island was used as a cache site where lodge poles and tule mats were stored for use elsewhere within basin (Smith 1936-138:488), although not mentioned where in Smith's notes was a cache site for canoes nearby to access the island itself which would have been among the first and last sites visited within the subsistence circuit. Of particular interest is the fact the peninsula neighboring Four mile Island was the site of a fire deer drive (Smith 1936-1938:212), although there were reputed to be numerous locations on the lake where fire surrounds and drives were employed to catch deer, this particular location is the only one that can be specifically re-identified through the ethnographic materials. Its proximity to the cache site is also telling in that one of the leading risks in the foraging life way was food loss resulting from vermin-predation. Of general concern for Kalispel families was securing their stores from bear predation (Smith 1936-1938:532), one of the common means of decreasing food loss from bear looting was to place cache sites on islands and to over engineer the storage pit with crib logs and a thick earthen mantle. That Kalispel families used canoes within the lake is directly supported through elder interviews of the 1930s and can be further deduced from the place name associated Two-mouth creek sinɬqʷ'éwuɬtn translates to "where they peel the bark for canoes" .

Discussion

I have previously demonstrated (Lyons 2008) the relative importance that white tail deer had to the traditional subsistence economy of the Kalispel people. In that examination of

those materials the Priest Lake basin contributed as much as 10% of the Lower Kalispel annual take of deer within the fall season. In this examination of the ethnographic record we see that eight of the ten fishing sites listed in Table 2 above were associated with the procurement of mountain whitefish which was a winter food store. Priest Lake's relative position to the winter villages of nɬx̣ɬóx̣ and kʷiƛ'té made it an important cultural landscape from a subsistence orientation alone. With that said, the lake and many of its geographic attributes within and neighboring have significant ethnic association for the Kalispel people; the lake itself was seen as a progenitor of the ancestral spirits in one of the Kalispel genesis stories. But as the principal interest of the IPNF at this time are this landscape's potential archaeological signatures I have formulated the following section to anticipate what should occur within the margins of the lake.

Archaeological Expectations for the Priest Lake Basin

As the modes and seasonality of cultural uses of these landforms can be explained in the ethnographic record the following expectations should be realized within its archaeological record. Within 100m of a creek's confluence with the lake located on both the left and right banks should be numerous small (≤5m^2) high density fire cracked rock scatter couplets. Given the fishing orientation of these sites we anticipate a high frequency of expedient tool forms such as edge battered cobbles, spall tools, and tabular knives. The duration of site occupancy according to the ethnographic materials was relatively brief thus site assemblages should be modest in both quantity and variety. Chipped stone assemblages should be biased towards locally available materials (i.e., quartzite and metasedimentary stone). The faunal assemblage at most sites will exhibited secondary butchery marks (cf Lyons 2008) and most likely be predominated by white tail deer. Given the indiscriminate nature of game procurement in the

late season no specific sex or age class structure should occur within the faunal assemblage, but for the absence of fawns. The Caribou Creek encampment should, however, appear to be a special case in a number of ways; first it was associated with bull trout rather than mountain whitefish harvesting moreover it was occupied when a specific task group was pursuing woodland caribou nearby and earlier in the season. Although also briefly and seasonally occupied for these purposes our expectations for this site's content would indicate a difference in its faunal assemblage but in other respects should echo the patterns we see elsewhere within the lake basin.

The Kalispel use of proscribed burns for trail maintenance, berry propagation, game drives, and preparing landforms for subsequent use for camping indicates a strong potential for stratified evidence of anthropogentic fire at each of the named alluvial fans with the exception o f Bear Creek. As like as not, neighboring communities used similar ecosystem management methods as maybe inferred through the archaeological observations of Hicks et al. (2006:5-9) at 10BW198.

Direct evidence for the cultural use of the fisheries discussed above may be illusive if specific effort is not made to secure it (e.g. the consistent use of control volume sampling). Traditional fish curing methods left little residual evidence in the form of bone waste. When archaeological fish bone is recovered it is typically through either fortuitous or specialized (e.g., floation) recovery. Unless systematically called for in any scope of work, special use permit and/or archaeological resources protection act permit fish bone recovery will likely continue to be underrepresented throughout the watershed. Theoretically blood proteins on commonly

occurring tool types associated with fishing camps may correct this general omission in data recovery but as yet paleo-DNA research is still infancy.

Conclusion

Kalispel people intensively and seasonally utilized a number of landforms within the Priest Lake Basin. Conceptually their activities result in a predictable set of material remains within a modest range of quantities and varieties. The source materials for this overview reflect very specific historic facts that need to be anticipated archaeology. First, the ethnographic record idealizes the optimal productivity of the behaviors described and accounts for the experiences of only a handful of individuals. Although ethnographic materials that are seriously collected and seriously analyzed cannot be ignored they similarly cannot be expected to reflect the totality of cultural expressions within a landscape. It is very likely sites not discussed within this overview known to resources managers were for the Kalispel elders of the 1930s either infrequently used and/or unimportant places within their view which . Despite ethnographic biases of emphasis and omissions which always occur the archaeological record of the Priest Lake Basin has considerable potential to advance regional understanding of prehistoric adaptation namely in that the modes of production for the ethno-historic period were both communal and highly focus resulting in task-specific tool kits. The archaeological evidence for the historic development of this pattern we suspect will refute the assertions of Roll and Hackenberger (1998:120) as to the centrality of salmon to Plateau culture.

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